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ARTICLES:

(1) Japan, US to pressure North Korea over human rights issues

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
May 1, 2006

The governments of Japan and the United States have begun boosting their pressure on North Korea over human rights issues. On April 28, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and coalition partner New Komeito submitted a bill dealing with North Korea's human right violations. Meanwhile, US President Bush, after meeting with abductee Megumi Yokota's mother, Sakie Yokota, and other relatives of abduction victims, made clear he would take a resolute attitude toward North Korea over human rights issues.

Japan: Bill introduced by lawmakers will back government's efforts

The centerpiece of the ruling parties' legislation against North Korea's abuse of human rights is to obligate the government to invoke economic sanctions on that country if no improvement is seen. The government intends to gradually put into practice steps to boost pressure on the North while maintaining its basic policy of dialogue and pressure. By demonstrating an even firmer stance toward North Korea, the ruling parties aim to press it to make concessions.

The legislation specifies, "It is the government's responsibility to resolve the issue of Japanese nationals abducted to North

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Korea." It also states, "If no significant improvement is seen in North Korea's violations of human rights, the government shall take punitive measures in accordance with such laws as the Special Measures Act on Banning Specified Vessels' Entry into Japanese Ports and the amendment to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Act. Establishing a special week to raise awareness of the abduction issue and working together with international agencies are also mentioned in the legislation.

The ruling parties aim to enact the bill into law during the current session of the Diet while keeping tabs on Pyongyang's response. As the Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) has already submitted to the Lower House a bill aimed at rescuing people who have suffered North Korea's human right violations, a lively debate is expected between the ruling and opposition camps in the weeks ahead.

In the government, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe set up a task force on the abduction issue. The task force is driving North Korea into a tight spot by gathering information on illegal acts by North Korea and strictly enforcing existing laws on that country. Japan has already taken such steps as promoting a review of the reduction or exemption from the fixed assets tax on the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryun)-affiliated facilities and bolstering the monitoring of international mail and illegal radio signals.

As of May 1, the government will review the simple screening system for exports of portable commodities, under which crews of foreign ships that call at Japanese ports can bring commodities out of Japan with an oral declaration. The aim is to prevent used goods from being brought out of Japan for sale abroad by obligating people to fill out an application form like they do for usual customs clearance.

Along with these efforts for the strict application of the existing laws, the ruling parties will give indirect support to the government's efforts to tackle the abduction issue by preparing legislation that will expressly urge North Korea to make concessions.

Points of the ruling parties' bill against North Korea's human

right violations

Illuminate the actual state of North Korea's human right violations and prevent them

Make utmost efforts to resolve the abduction issue, as it is the government's responsibility to do so

Work together with local governments to raise public awareness

Take necessary measures to restrain abuse of human rights in accordance with such laws as the Special Measures Act on Banning Specified Vessels' Entry into Japanese Ports and the amendment to the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Act if no significant improvement is seen in human right violations

Set Dec. 10-16 as a week for making North Korea's human right violations widely known

Have the government annually submit and release a report on its

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approaches to North Korea's human right violations to the Diet

Strive to exchange information and strengthen cooperation with other countries and international organizations.

US: "Second arrow" to follow financial sanctions

By Hiroshi Maruya, Washington

"For Americans, it's hard to believe that a leader would encourage the abduction of children. If North Korea expects to be respected in the world, it must respect human rights and must allow this mother to hug her child again." US President Bush criticized North Korea and its leader Kim Jong Il in strong language for its violations of human rights in his meeting with Sakie Yokota and relatives of abduction victims.

Bush said to Yokota: "It takes courage to speak out about someone who does not respect human rights. You are doing that." Bush agreed to the meeting with relatives of abduction victims in order to highlight pressure in dealing with human right issues, as the financial sanctions imposed on North Korea have proven effective.

The six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear ambitions have been stalled since last November, as Pyongyang has strongly objected to US financial sanctions. When chief representatives to the six-party talks gathered in Tokyo recently, the US representative refused to meet with the North Korean official. North Korea wants to break the impasse by holding direct negotiations with the US, but the US has said that it will only discuss financial sanctions within the framework of the six-party talks. The US has no room to compromise with the North.

The US termed three countries - Iraq, Iran, and North Korea - an Axis of Evil. The US toppled the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq, but since then things in that country have not gone as favorably as the US expected. In dealing with Iran, the US has indicated that it is ready to impose sanctions, but other countries have yet to go along. The US intends to be hard on North Korea and to achieve results by doing so.

The Department of State's annual report released on April 28 once again lists North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism. These political circumstances lay behind President Bush's meeting with relatives of an abduction victim.

The US Congress, as well, is raising pressure on North Korea in line with the administration.

US House Committee on International Relations Chairman Hyde emphasized: "I will pressure the State Department to put the abduction issue high on agenda." Special Envoy on Human Rights in

North Korea Lefkowitz indicated that the US plans to accept North Korean defectors in the near future.

(2) Foreign Minister Aso off to US, Belgium, Lithuania; Aims to regain setback in upcoming LDP leadership race by taking advantage overseas trip

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
April 30, 2006

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Foreign Minister Taro Aso leaves on April 30 for an 8-day trip, which will take him to the United States, Belgium and Lithuania. He will deliver a speech as a first Japanese cabinet minister at headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels. He will also be a first Japanese cabinet minister to visit Lithuania, in which Chiune Sugihara, a well known Japanese consul general, issued transit-visas for Jewish refugees during World War II. Aso aims to fight for a rollback in the upcoming party presidential race, making a big scene in his diplomatic stage.

Aso is expected to meet with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in the US, the first leg of his tour. He just met with Rice in March in Australia. He plans to play up his close ties with her through their talks. He also intends to show his own channels of communication to such key US government officials as Vice President Richard Cheney and Stephen Hadley, assistant to President George W. Bush.

Attending together with eight new Diet members a seminar of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Aso will deliver a speech there on Japan's East Asia diplomacy. He will exchange views with Capitol Hill members on the North Korea and China situations.

In Belgium, Aso will meet with Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt and European Union Commission Chairman Manuel Barroso.

At NATO headquarters, he will give a speech on fight against terrorism and Japan's contribution to international peace.

In Lithuania, he will visit the Chiune Sugiura Memorial Hall.

An aide to Aso revealed the aim of his overseas trip, saying:

"Mr. Aso intends to play up a stance of placing emphasis on a human rights issue, including abductions by talking about Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea and visiting the Sugiura Memorial Hall."

According to the results of various opinion polls on a successor to Koizumi as prime minister, Aso lags behind Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe. Can he take advantage of his overseas trip

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to gain popularity?

(3) Minshuto head Ozawa suspending diplomatic activities

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
April 28, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa has not been engaging in diplomatic activities, such as traveling abroad and receiving courtesy calls by foreign ambassadors to Japan. The major reason has been because he was busy with supporting the campaign of the party's candidate in a House of Representatives by-election for the Chiba No. 7 constituency. Some party lawmakers, however, say that he should at least receive courtesy calls by foreign ambassadors.

Ozawa told senior party members immediately after assuming the party's presidency that he would not travel abroad during the course of the current Diet session. It has been a practice for

party heads to visit foreign countries during the Golden Week

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holiday period in early May. The year before last, then President Naoto Kan traveled to Europe. President Katsuya Okada made a trip to the Middle East and Africa last year.

Ozawa reportedly will spend his holidays enjoying fishing in Japan. He has turned down requests from foreign ambassadors to pay courtesy calls, citing, "Receiving courtesy calls is meaningless," according to an aide to Ozawa.

(4) Government withholds opinion on US-India civilian nuclear cooperation; May go along with it in view of attaching emphasis to relations with US and India

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)
May 1, 2006

The government decided yesterday to put off clarifying its view for the time being on a nuclear cooperation agreement reached between the United States and India. Under the agreement, the US allows India to possess nuclear weapons as an exception from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). A senior Foreign Ministry official confusedly said:

"If Japan supports the accord, it will have to change its postwar foreign policy of advancing nuclear nonproliferation as the only country to have suffered nuclear attacks."

The expectation is that even if the US side asks Japan in a foreign ministerial slated for May 3 in Washington to back the accord, the Japanese side will refrain from giving a specific answer.

Under the agreement, India accepts inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) only on its civilian nuclear facilities, while the US provides nuclear-related technology and fuel to India. Britain, France, and Russia have welcomed the agreement. Since the Japanese government, however, has yet to make a decision, the Foreign Ministry was considering a response prior to the Japan-US foreign ministerial. As a result, the ministry has determined that there is no need for a hurried decision on the matter, as the US Congress is now discussing bills related to the accord and because India and the IAEA have not put an end to negotiations on the inspection matter.

However, there is growing sentiment in the government and ruling coalition to go along with agreement, given relations with the US and India.

(5) Late former Yasukuni Shrine Chief Priest Tsukuba avoided enshrining Class-A war criminals at Yasukuni Shrine out of consideration for Emperor's shrine visit, according to his eldest son and shrine's former public relations office chief

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
April 29, 2006

By Ryuko Tadokoro

The late Fujimaro Tsukuba, former chief priest of Yasukuni Shrine during the period right after the end of World War II (WWII) through 1978, had intentionally sidestepped the idea of enshrining WWII Class A war criminals at the shrine, according to

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testimony from the shrine's former public relations office chief and others. Tsukuba also indicated concern that enshrining them would stand in the way of the Emperor's visits to the shrine. Tsukuba died in March 1978, and soon after his death, his

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successor chief priest enshrined the Class A war criminals. The testimony is proof that the process leading to the enshrinement of Class A war criminals followed a somewhat a zigzag path, although there is an argument that what led the shrine to honor Class A war criminals was the list of names prepared by the former Health Ministry and sent by it to the shrine.

Tsukuba hailed from a family that had once been a part of the

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imperial family. He took office as the fifth chief priest in 1946 and died at the age of 73 while in office. His successor was the late Nagayoshi Matsudaira. In October 1978, Matsudaira decided to enshrine 14 Class A war criminals, including former Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, at the shrine. The shrine's former Public Relations Office Chief Hisao Baba, 81, who had been an aide to Tsukuba, and Tsukuba's eldest son, Hisaharu, 75, a former Waseda

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University professor, recently agreed to interviews with the Mainichi Shimbun.

According to Baba, when he asked Tsukuba whether he had a plan to enshrine Class A war criminals, soon after former Prime Minister Tojo and others were executed, Tsukuba told him: "It would concern the Imperial Household Agency. Enshrining them will be impossible while I am alive." Referring to the expression, "impossible while I am alive," Baba explained, "What he desired would be not to enshrine them in actuality." As for the words, "concern the Imperial Household Agency," Baba pointed out that (Tsukuba) had been concerned about the possible impact of the Emperor's visit to the shrine. Tsukuba also indicated consideration for public sentiments that "A great number of the public was fixated on 'hate against Tojo.'"

Meanwhile, according to Tsukuba's eldest son, Hisaharu, Tsukuba stated, "Class B and C war criminals were considered to be the same war victims as general soldiers, but Class A war criminals were responsible for the war." Tsukuba remained cautious about enshrining Class A war criminals throughout his life. In 1966, the former Ministry of Health sent a list of names of Class A war criminals to the shrine. In 1970, the general assembly of representatives of shrine believers decided to enshrine Class A war criminals. This decision was entrusted to Tsukuba, but Tsukuba did not implement it while he was alive. When it comes to

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the Emperor's visit to the shrine, Emperor Showa visited the shrine eight times after 1945, but since 1975 there has been no visit by an Emperor to the shrine. Some have argued that consideration for the collective enshrinement of Class A war criminals has led Emperor Showa and the current Emperor to forgo visiting the shrine.

(6) USFJ realignment (Part 3): Japan, US teaming up to deal with newly emerging crises; Bilateral fusion under way with challenges in store

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
April 28, 2006

Japan and the United States are going to forge a new partnership through the realignment of US forces in Japan-not only in the area of readiness for emergencies but also in the area of counterterrorism and missile defense. Their 'bilateral fusion' is

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steadily under way on the sidelines of consultations on specific realignment plans.

"Beat it into your body, not into your head!"

On Jan. 9, a group of Japanese rangers assembled at a US Marine Corps base in California. They were sent there from the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) as its first batch of trainees. Their training was a far cry from being a leisurely overseas business

trip. The GSDF sent 125 members to the US mainland base, where a drill sergeant and his unsparing directives were in store for them.

The GSDF trainees swam in the winter sea with weapons on their backs and rowed rubber dinghies to go ashore at a simulated landing point. Morning, noon, and night, they kept on training with this menu over and over again. Their seaborne training was in anticipation of what to do and how to win back an uninhabited island off Okinawa and Kyushu-if and when that island falls under the occupation of foreign commandoes. "You're professionals." With this, a USMC brass officer warranted the GSDF soldiers after their training sessions conducted for about three weeks.

The US Marines currently deploys 17,000 troops in Okinawa Prefecture and will redeploy 8,000 of them to Guam. However, Okinawa will remain a frontline bastion readied for emergencies. The United States wants Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to acquire the capability of responding to emergencies for the time being. "They want the SDF to be able to fight together in the real sense of the term," says a senior official of the Defense Agency.

In late February, the SDF and US Forces Japan (USFJ) conducted a command post exercise (CPX) at a basement of the Defense Agency's headquarters. The CPX was codenamed "Keen Edge." Its scenario was that a "purple" country fueled missiles, and that an "orange" country's submarine intruded into Japan's territorial waters in the East China Sea. The CPX simulated and confirmed joint counteractions to be taken by the SDF and USFJ against these countries in two colors on the computer screen.

In the CPX, the two countries were unnamed. "It's apparent to everyone that the purple country is North Korea and the orange country is China, which is pushing for its military buildup," an official of the Defense Agency says, however.

The US Army's 1st Corps, currently headquartered on the US mainland, covers the Pacific basin. In the process of realigning US forces in Japan, the Pentagon will relocate the 1st Corps' command functionality to Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture. In the meantime, the GSDF will set up a new unit, called the Central Readiness Command (CRC), which also will be headquartered at Camp Zama.

The Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) will relocate its Air Defense Command (ADC) functionality to the US Air Force's Yokota base, and Yokota will be a missile defense strongpoint. Along with this force realignment, USFJ will install a mobile radar system, called "X-band radar," at the ASDF's Shariki Detachment base in Aomori Prefecture. Meanwhile, Japan will also set up its own radar systems in three years at four locations, including the island of Shimokoshikijima in Kagoshima Prefecture.

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With bilateral defense cooperation deepening, the Defense Agency and the SDF are facing new challenges. "What's this all about?" With this, an USFJ official filed a strong protest with the Defense Agency and the SDF in January this year over the outflow of data about a surface-to-air missile (SAM) being developed for the GSDF.

Data about Japan's missile development has nothing to do directly with US forces. USFJ realignment, however, is intended for the US armed services to share intelligence with their respective SDF counterparts even more closely through such steps as integrating their commands. Japan and the United States are moving ahead with further cooperation. Specifically, the SDF and USFJ have plans to share radio frequencies for their communications. Japan's security awareness probably appeared lax in the eyes of USFJ officials.

That is not the only problem. One other example is the US Army's 1st Corps headquarters, which will be moved to Camp Zama. The Japanese government has explained that its relocation to Zama

does not conflict with the Japan-US Security Treaty, which stipulates the scope of USFJ command to areas within the bounds of the Far East region. In the Diet, however, opposition parties are critical of the 1st Corps' command relocation to Zama. "We don't know how the Far East clause will be ensured," says one in an opposition party. The relocation of the 1st Corps' command to Camp Zama will likely be a point of contention in Diet debates.

In addition, there is a problem in the area of missile defense as well. What if Japan shoots down a ballistic missile targeted at Guam or elsewhere in the United States? In this case, the problem is that Japan will bump against its constitutional prohibition on participating in collective defense. Some wonder if it is possible to sort out missiles heading for Japan. In early May, the Japanese and US governments are aiming to wrap up their USFJ realignment talks and reach a final agreement thereupon. Still, a number of challenges will be left even afterward.

(7) Resumption of US beef imports; Final judgment to be reached as early as June

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 3) (Almost full)
April 30, 2006

The government will speed up efforts to take procedures necessary for making a final decision on the issue of whether to resume US beef imports as early as June. The plan is to hold talks with the US government when Golden Week is over so that prior inspections of US meat processing facilities can be started before the end of May. Some government officials want to see the beef issue settled before Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visits the US in late June. However, in view of deep-seated skepticism about the US beef safety control system seen among Japanese consumers, a final decision could be delayed.

Government to inspect all meat processing facilities; Difficult to eradicate distrust

Now that the Japanese government on April 24 completed town meetings with consumers at 10 locations throughout the country to exchange views on a possible US beef import resumption, it thinks that it has paved the way to a certain degree for it to decide whether to resume US beef imports. A number of voices skeptical

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about the US BSE testing system and calls for strengthening measures to prevent a recurrence of the inclusion of vertebral columns in its beef shipment were heard during the town meetings. In response, a senior official of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) stressed that as a condition for reinstating the beef trade, it is necessary to carry out prior inspections at US beef processing facilities and strengthen the quarantine system.

The US government intends to promptly reinspect all 37 meat-processing facilities that are authorized to ship products to Japan. It wants to start talks with Japan on specific conditions for reinstating the beef trade. During such talks, Japan will seek US approval to conduct prior inspections. Secretary of Agriculture Johanns had already indicated a basic policy of accepting inspections by Japan.

When Tokyo decided to resume US beef imports last December, it came under fire as having made a hasty decision, because it had not yet completed inspections of all meat packers. It will, therefore, call on the US side to allow it to carry out detailed inspections of slaughterhouses and inspection sites during prior inspections. It wants to inspect all of the 37 facilities before it decides whether to resume beef imports or not.

The government also intends to improve the quarantine system for US beef arriving at Narita Airport. Only portions of imported items have thus far been subject to inspection, but the government will undertake coordination with a view to extensively increasing the number of items subject to inspection. There is also the strong possibility of carrying out spot-checks on

imported products. The aim is to obtain understanding from consumers by strengthening border controls.

The government's ostensible position is that it is not necessary to decide to resume US beef imports before Prime Minister Koizumi visits the US. However, pressure for an early resumption before the mid-term elections for Congress in November is mounting. Chances are that unless Japan comes up with a definite stance of resuming US beef imports by the time the prime minister visits the US, calls for retaliatory action might increase.

However, there are many challenges before beef imports can be resumed. Even if prior inspections are started in late May, they will not be finished before early June. The government is expected to reach a final decision after holding another round of town meetings with consumers. However, it is unclear to what extent the government can press ahead with procedures for reinstating the beef trade and secure safety of US beef in a short period of time.

Consumers have deep-seated distrust of US beef. A number of members of the Prion Expert Council of the government's Food Safety Commission, which had discussed conditions for resuming US beef imports up to late last year, quit in late March, causing dismay among consumers.

If another violation occurs, both the US and Japanese governments are bound to face harsh criticism. The government is pressed to make a difficult decision, sandwiched between domestic opinion and US demands.

(8) Editorial: 50 years later, government has yet to fulfill

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responsibility for victims of Minamata disease

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
April 28, 2006

In the many trials dealing with Minamata disease, the courts handed down judgments that held the government accountable due to a sluggish, bungled, and negligent response for failing to prevent the spread of human suffering triggered by industrial mercury poisoning. On May 1, Japan marks the 50th anniversary of the first official report of the outbreak of the disease, but the Minamata problem has yet to be resolved. The government is still unwilling to set a course allowing more patients to receive compensation and relief. Such a stance has delayed a settlement, and negotiations crucial to the sufferers' lives and health are still going on.

Among those who have been recognized as Minamata victims, there are government-certified claimants and legally recognized claimants. These two categories have set different standards of recognition and amounts of compensation. In the screening conducted so far for administrative recognition, about 15,000 applications were rejected, and 3,800 patients are waiting for their applications to be screened. There are 13,000 persons who have not been recognized as Minamata patients but carry the official designation as patients suffering from mercury poisoning.

The nation has yet to prepare both a unified system and recognition standard. Some criticize that the government has given priority to the task of narrowing down those entitled to compensation over giving relief to disease victims. The lack of a unified system is attributed to the government's rigid approach.

In lawsuits filed by Minamata disease patients calling for compensation in 1990, five courts (Tokyo, Kumamoto, Fukuoka and Kyoto district courts, and Fukuoka High Court) admitted that the central and Kumamoto governments, as well as Chisso Corp, which dumped mercury into Minamata Bay, had failed to fulfill their respective responsibilities. The courts advised them to reach an out-of-court settlement with the plaintiffs. Chisso and the Kumamoto prefectural government followed the advice, but the

central government adamantly refused to sit on the negotiating table.

In 1995, the Murayama cabinet tried to bring a political settlement to the Minamata issue by hammering out measures to widen the scope of those eligible for compensation under a different framework from the patient-recognition systems. At that time, too, the central government ministries concerned refused to admit their faults and blunders. They tried to solve the issue by complicating the nation's system further. In 2004, the Supreme Court handed down a judgment admitting the government's responsibility for patients' ordeal. The government ministries, though, claimed that a legal judgment is different from an administrative one. The bureaucracy is still unwilling to introduce a comprehensive compensation system.

During a period from the official report through the scientific discovery of the disease caused by highly dangerous organic mercury dumped by Chisso into Minamata Bay, the government continued to refuse conducting scientific research and turned down demands from local residents for having Chisso stop

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discharging contaminated water. It is considered that during this period, the mercury contamination in the waters reached its highest level, resulting in damaging many local persons' lives.

The chief lawyer of the plaintiffs' group said that lawsuits have proceeded smoothly since judges began to contact fetal Minamata patients. In order to conquer the disease and come up with a rational compensation system, the government must learn the actual state of the disease and the reality of the damage.

We must continue to carefully monitor what response the government will make to Minamata victims.

(9) US concerned about Japan's role behind Iran's nuclear development

Sentaku, May 2006
(Full)

Japanese research institutes reportedly have played a certain role behind Iran's nuclear development.

According to Japanese government officials, dozens of Iranian scientists have been studying at Tohoku University and other research institutes in Japan in the area of state-of-the-art nuclear-related technologies such as plasma fusion that has both military and civilian application. If research in areas other than nuclear science is also included, there are about 10,000 Iranian researchers and students in Japan. The US government is increasingly concerned about this situation.

A senior US State Department official said that North Korea and Iran have actively cooperated with each other in the military area, including missile development. It is also conceivable that the two countries have shared research results produced in the areas of nuclear and missile development to some extent. If that is the case, the Iran problem may have some effect even on Japan's national security.

Japan has taken a hard-line stance toward North Korea, but it is open-minded toward Iran. If it is found true that Iran and North Korea have established cooperative ties in the military area, Japan will be forced to take a tougher stance toward Iran.

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